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THE ORIGIN OF YAHWEH-WORSHIP IN ISRAEL

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PART I. THE DATE OF INTRODUCTION

Concerning the origin of the religion of Yahweh the Old Testament contains two widely divergent traditions.

The Judean Document of the Hexateuch (J), which is characterized by a constant use of the divine name "Yahweh (Jehovah)," states in Gen. 4:26 that the cult of this god was introduced by Enosh, the grandson of Adam: "To Seth also was born a son, and he called his name Enosh; he was the first to call upon the name of Yahweh." (So LXX and Sam. text.) A later stratum of J (Gen. 4:3 f.) represents Cain and Abel, children of "the man" and Eve, as bringing sacrifices to Yahweh. Gen. 5:29; 8:20; 12:8; 13:18; 26:25; 28:21 depict the patriarchs as worshipers of Yahweh. In the J sections of Exod., chap. 3, when Yahweh appears to Moses, he does not reveal his name as new or explain its meaning, but assumes that it is well known. In 3:7 he speaks of Israel as already his people. In 3:16 he instructs Moses to say: "Yahweh, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob, hath appeared unto me." In 5:1 Moses says to Pharaoh: "Thus saith Yahweh, the God of Israel, Let my people go." In 5:3, and frequently afterward in sections, the people in Egypt speak of "Yahweh our God." J, accordingly, teaches that the name "Yahweh" was known from the time of Enosh, and that God was worshiped under this name by all the forefathers of Israel.

A different conception is found in other documents of the Old Testament. These teach that the name "Yahweh" was unknown to the patriarchs, that it was first revealed to Moses, and through him was communicated to Israel. The Priestly Code (P) in Exod. 6:2 f says: "God spake unto Moses and said unto him, I am Yahweh: and I appeared unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob as God Shaddai, but by my name Yahweh I was not known to them." The

traditional harmonistic interpretation of this passage, still followed by Klostermann¹ and by Davidson,² as meaning, "My name 'Yahweh' was known to the patriarchs, but the full significance of the name was not yet comprehended by them," is thoroughly artificial. If P had meant to say this, he must have used very different language. That these words are to be given their natural meaning is proved by the following facts: (1) P never uses the name "Yahweh" in his history before Exod. 6:2, where it is revealed to Moses. His avoidance of the name in patriarchal times is evidently due to the belief that it was not in use. (2) Proper names compounded with "Yahweh" are never given by P before the time of Moses. The absence of such compounds in patriarchal days indicates belief that the name "Yahweh" was not known. (3) In Exod. 6:7 Yahweh says: "I will take you to me for a people, and I will be to you a God"—a form of expression which implies that Yahweh first became the God of Israel in consequence of the revelation to Moses.

This is the view, not only of the late Priestly Document, but also of the early Ephraimitic Document (E). Through the whole of Genesis E, like P, abstains from using the divine name "Yahweh" and speaks only of "Elohim," that is, "God." In his account of the theophany to Moses (Exod. 3:10-15) Moses is ignorant of the personal name of the deity who appears to him, and regards the people in Egypt as ignorant of his name, for he says: "When they shall say unto me, What is his name? what shall I say unto them?" Thereupon God replies: "I will be what I will be: thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, Ehyeh ['I will be' = "Yahweh," "He will be"] hath sent me unto you." In conformity with this idea that Yahweh was a new name first revealed to Moses, E in Josh. 24:14 states that the Hebrews served other gods beyond the river and in Egypt.

The early prophets Amos and Hosea also regard Yahweh's relations with Israel as beginning at the time of the exodus. Cf. Amos 2:10, "It was I who brought you up from the land of Egypt, and led you in the wilderness forty years;" 2:9, "It was I who destroyed from before them the Amorite;" 3:1, "The whole family that I brought up from Egypt;" 9:7, "Did I not bring Israel up out of the land of Egypt?"

¹ *Geschichte des Volkes Israel*, p. 72.

² *Theology of the Old Testament*, p. 50.

Hos. 2:14 f., "Behold I will allure her and bring her into the wilderness . . . and she shall make answer there as in the days when she came up out of the land of Egypt;" 9:10, "I found Israel like grapes in the wilderness . . . but they came to Baal Peor;" 12:13, "By a prophet Yahweh brought Israel up out of the land of Egypt." In all these passages Yahweh's manifestation of himself begins with the exodus, and nowhere is any revelation to the patriarchs mentioned. This proves that the early prophets held the same view as E and P, that "Yahweh" was a new name first given to Israel through Moses.

These, then, are the two contradictory traditions in regard to the origin of Yahweh-worship: according to one, Yahweh was known to the forefathers of Israel from primeval times; according to the other he first revealed himself to Moses. What are we to do with these traditions? Is one of them true over against the other, or do they neutralize one another by their divergent testimony?

I. *The Canaanitish theory.* — At the beginning of the last century the tendency was widespread to infer from this contradiction that Hebrew tradition was worthless, and that it must be disregarded in the effort to ascertain the true origin of Yahweh-worship. Von Bohlen³ von der Alm,⁴ Dozy,⁵ Hartmann,⁶ Land,⁷ Goldziher,⁸ Colenso,⁹ and others maintained that the worship of Yahweh was adopted by Israel neither in patriarchal times nor in the time of Moses, but after the occupation of Canaan. From the fact that Yahweh is conceived as a king, who dwells in seclusion in his palace, von Bohlen infers that his worship could not have been introduced into Israel until after the establishing of the monarchy. If Yahweh was first learned of by Israel at this late date, he must have been a god of the Canaanites, whom the Hebrews adopted along with other elements of Canaanitish civilization.

³ *Die Genesis historisch-kritisch erläutert* (1835), p. civ (Eng. trans., pp. 153 f.).

⁴ *Theologische Briefe*, Vol. I (1862), pp. 524 f.

⁵ *De Israëliten te Mekka*, Germ. trans. (1864), p. 39.

⁶ *Indogermanen und Semiten*,

⁷ *Theologisch Tijdschrift* (1868), pp. 156–70.

⁸ *Der Mythos bei der Hebräern* (1878), pp. 327 ff. (Eng. trans., pp. 272 ff.)

⁹ *The Pentateuch*, Part II, chap. viii; Part VII, chap. ix.

A modified form of this theory is presented by Friedrich Delitzsch.¹⁰ He holds that there was a primitive Sumerian deity in south Babylonia called "I." This name the Semitic Babylonians transformed into "Yau." It penetrated into Canaan, along with Babylonian civilization, in the period between 2500 and 1700 B. C., where it assumed the form "Yahu" or "Yah (Jah)." This name was learned by the Hebrews after the conquest. The longer form "Yahweh" was subsequently developed by artificial etymology in order to differentiate the national god of Israel from the old god of Canaan. In his later work, *Babel und Bibel*, Delitzsch seems to hold that Yahu was a national god of the Canaanites who founded the first dynasty of Babylon, and that they shared his worship with the kindred races of Palestine. In either case Yahu was originally a Canaanitish deity and the Hebrews first learned to know him after the conquest.

A similar view is held by Winckler.¹¹ According to him, Yahu was a primitive Canaanitish deity whom the Hebrews adopted after their entrance into Canaan. "Yahweh" was differentiated out of "Yahu" by the etymologizing fancy of the priests of the sanctuary of Sinai in the land of Mutsri. The Calebite clans in the south of Judah, whose arms placed David on the throne, worshiped this god; and when David became king, he made Yahweh the national god of Israel.

We are not concerned at this point with the relation of "Yah" to "Yahweh," nor with the problem of the Babylonian or other ultimate origin of this name, but merely with the question: When did the Israelites first come to worship this god? Recent critics are practically unanimous in holding that Israel cannot have learned the religion of Yahweh after the conquest, but that they must have brought it with them into Canaan, for the following reasons:

1. If Yah was a primitive Canaanitish deity, we should expect his name to occur in names of Canaanites of the pre-Israelitish period and at the time of the conquest. The Egyptian records, the Tell-el-Amarna letters, and the Old Testament furnish us with a considerable number of Canaanitish proper names. Compounds of "Abi," "Ammi," "Ahi," "Ashera," "Ninib," "El," "Baal," "Baalat,"

¹⁰ *Wo lag das Paradies?* (1889), pp. 158 ff.; *Babel und Bibel* (1902), pp. 46 ff.

¹¹ *Geschichte Israels*, Vol. I, pp. 37 ff.

"Hadam," etc., are numerous, but no names are found compounded with "Yah."

2. If, as Delitzsch assumes, "Yah" was learned by the Israelites from the Canaanites, and "Yahweh" was a differentiation invented by the ruling classes, then we should expect "Yah" to occur frequently in names of the common people, but to be avoided by the aristocracy. In reality, the reverse is true. In early times names compounded with "Yah" are frequent in the families of Samuel, Saul, David, and the other kings of Judah and Israel, but are rare in the names of the common people. This shows that the worship of Yahweh was not a popular cult that ultimately received the recognition of the authorities, but that it was originally a cult of the few that ultimately won the adhesion of the many.¹²

3. There is no trace in Hebrew tradition of any connection of Yahweh with the Canaanites. The traditions do not agree in regard to the antiquity of Yahweh-worship, but they do agree that it was older than the conquest of Canaan. If it was really derived from the Canaanites, some knowledge of this fact would surely have lingered in the national memory.

4. The name "Yehoshua (Joshua)" is well attested as borne by the leader of Israel in the conquest of Canaan, but this name is compounded with "Yahweh," and therefore proves that this deity was known to the Hebrews at least as early as the time of the exodus. If the name of Moses' mother, "Jochebed," be authentic and be compounded with "Yahweh," this will be another evidence in the same direction. Judg. 18:30 mentions Yehonathan (Jonathan), the grandson of Moses. This is certainly a "Yahweh"-compound, and it seems as though it must have been given before the conquest, or at least so soon after that Canaanitish influence is unthinkable. Joash and Jotham, the father and the son of Gideon, bear names that are probably compounded with "Yahweh." They at least show that the name was in use in Israel before the time of David.

5. In the Song of Deborah, a generally admitted genuine composition of the age of Deborah, we read (Judg. 5:4): "Yahweh, when thou wentest forth out of Seir, when thou marchest out of the region of Edom, the earth trembled." Here Yahweh is repre-

¹² See Gray, *Hebrew Proper Names*, p. 262.

sented as coming to the help of his people from a land outside of Canaan. This is inexplicable, if he was originally a god of Canaan; but it is natural, if he was a god whom Israel worshiped in its old dwelling-place in the southern desert.

6. The connection of Yahweh with Horeb-Sinai by all strands of Hebrew tradition is evidence that the worship of Yahweh was not learned by Israel from the Canaanites. If he had been originally a god of Canaan, Israel could never have come to think of a mountain outside of Canaan as his special dwelling-place.

Whether Sinai and Horeb are identical is a moot question. J in Exod. 2:15 locates Sinai in the land of Midian (cf. Hab. 3:7). Midian, according to the testimony of the Old Testament, the Assyrian records, the Greek and the Arabic geographers, lay on the east side of the Gulf of 'Aqaba, in the neighborhood of the modern Makna. After leaving Egypt, the Israelites, according to J, marched three days' journey into the wilderness of Shur (Exod. 15:22). Here, according to 17:7, they were at Meribah (Kadesh). Thence, according to 19:3ff., they went to Sinai. Kadesh is 'Ain Qadis, near the southern border of Palestine. It is out of the way for people journeying to the traditional Sinai at the southern end of the so-called Sinaitic Peninsula, but is a natural stopping-place on the road to the land of Midian in western Arabia. The Song of Deborah (Judg. 5:4) says: "Yahweh, when thou wentest forth from Seir, marchedst from the region of Edom." Here it is implied that Yahweh's abode is either in the land of Edom or in the south beyond it, i. e., in the land of Midian. A gloss on this passage in vs. 5 identifies the abode with Sinai. The ancient poem in Deut. 33:2 reads: "Yahweh came from Sinai, flamed up for his people from Seir; he shined forth from Mount Paran, and he came to Meribath-Kadesh" (emended text). According to this, Sinai must lie in western Arabia, since Yahweh comes from it to Kadesh by way of the land of Edom. In like manner, in Hab. 3:3 we read: "God came from Teman, and the holy one from Mount Paran. . . . I saw the tents of Cushan in affliction, the curtains of the land of Midian did tremble." It appears, accordingly, that all our older authorities locate Sinai in western Arabia, near the land of Edom. P is commonly supposed to support the traditional location of

Sinai at the southern end of the so-called Sinaitic Peninsula, since in Numb. 33:8 f. he lets the Israelites, after crossing the Red Sea, march three days in the wilderness to Marah, thence to Elim, and thence to the Red Sea again. This seems to show that they followed the eastern shore of the Gulf of Suez; but it is quite possible that Elim is the same as Elath, and that by the "Red Sea" in this connection P means the Gulf of 'Aqaba. In that case he agrees with J in locating Sinai in the land of Midian.

On the other hand, it is claimed that E locates Horeb at the southern end of the Sinaitic peninsula. This view is based upon Exod. 13:18, which states that God did not lead the Israelites directly from Egypt to Canaan by way of the land of the Philistines, but round about by the way of the wilderness of the Red Sea. This is supposed to refer to the desert on the east side of the Gulf of Suez, but it may quite as well refer to the desert on the shore of the Gulf of 'Aqaba, in which case Horeb is to be sought in Arabia and not in the Sinaitic Peninsula. In Exod. 3:1, E, like J, locates Horeb in Midian, unless the words "the priest of Midian" are deleted as a gloss. The author of the Song of Deborah was a native of the north, and therefore probably followed the same tradition as E in calling the mount of God Horeb, but in Judg. 5:4 he clearly locates this mountain in or beyond the mountains of Edom. Dèut. 1:2 (cf. 1:9) states that "it is eleven days' journey from Horeb by the way of mount Seir unto Kadesh Barnea." In going from the traditional Horeb to Kadesh, one would not journey by way of Mount Seir, and the distance would not be eleven days. This passage points to a location of Horeb east of the Gulf of 'Aqaba, in the same place where we have found that Sinai was situated. Elijah's journey of forty days to Horeb (1 Kings 19:8) also points to a more remote location than that of the traditional mount of God. There is no good reason, therefore, to doubt that Sinai and Horeb are the same mountain. They are located in the same region, and they play the same part in Hebrew tradition. Their identity, although questioned by von Gall, Wellhausen, and Stade, is admitted by Budde, Giesebrecht, Marti, Cheyne, and most recent critics. Even if it could be proved that Sinai and Horeb were distinct mountains, the argument would still hold good that Yahweh cannot have been

originally a god of Canaan, since both of these mountains with which he is so intimately associated lie outside of that land. The unanimous testimony of Hebrew tradition, that Sinai-Horeb was in a peculiar sense his dwelling-place is conclusive evidence that Israel learned to know him before its entrance into Canaan.

7. The conquest of Canaan implies unity of action among the Hebrew tribes. Such unity was possible only on the basis of a common religion. The Song of Deborah assumes that Yahweh is the god of all the tribes of Israel. It unites them under the name "the people of Yahweh;" and tells how, when they were summoned to come to the help of Yahweh like brave men, they willingly responded and cheerfully risked their lives in the holy war against the Canaanites. Such an attitude presupposes common experience of the help of Yahweh on the part of the tribes before their entrance into Canaan, and is inconsistent with the idea that he was a God whom they came to know after the conquest.

8. From early times Israel was conscious of an antagonism between its god and the gods of Canaan. Yahweh was a jealous god who would not tolerate the Baalim, but waged ceaseless warfare against them and ultimately destroyed them. Whence came this antagonism, if Yahweh was originally only one of the Baalim? It can be explained only by recognizing that he was a foreign god whom Israel had brought into Canaan, and who had nothing in common with the indigenous deities of the land.¹³

All these considerations make it certain that the worship of Yahweh was not learned in Canaan, but was brought into that country by Israel. In that case we cannot reject the two Old Testament traditions in regard to the origin of this worship, but must decide between them. Either the religion of Yahweh originated at the

¹³ See Oort, *De Dienst der Baalim onder Israel* (1864), trans. by Colenso, *The Worship of Baalim in Israel* (1865), pp. 17-51 (against Goldziher); Kuenen, *De Godsdienst Israels* (1869), Vol. I, pp. 397-401 (Eng. trans., *The Religion of Israel*, Vol. I, pp. 398-403; against Land); König, *Die Hauptprobleme der altisraelitischen Religionsgeschichte* (1884), pp. 24-38; Robertson, *The Early Religion of Israel* (1892), chap. xi; Smend, *Alttestamentliche Religionsgeschichte* (1893), pp. 13-15; Marti, *Geschichte der israelitischen Religion* (1897), p. 55; Kautzsch, "Religion of Israel," in *Hastings' Dictionary of the Bible*, Supplementary Volume, p. 613; Wellhausen, *Israelitische und jüdische Geschichte* (1895), p. 12.

time of the exodus, as E and P think; or it dated from an earlier period, as J thinks. This leads us to consider:

II. *The primeval theory*.—The traditional view in the Jewish and in the Christian church has been that Yahweh was the God of Israel long before Moses. This theory ignores, or explains away the testimony of E, P, and the early prophets, and accepts the testimony of J that Yahweh was worshiped from the beginning of the world. On this theory the work of Moses was merely to call Israel back to the worship of a god already well known to the patriarchs.

In a modified form this traditional theory is still widely prevalent. No critics of today believe that J is right in carrying back the worship of Yahweh to the beginning of the world, but many believe that he is right in tracing it to the time of Abraham. Renan¹⁴ says:

The name of "Yahu" or "Yahweh," the equivalent of "El," was no doubt much respected, but the sages of these very ancient times seemed to descry a danger in this proper name and preferred the names "El," "Elyon," Shaddai," and 'Elohim."

Kittel¹⁵ says:

Moses could hardly have forced upon his people a foreign, hitherto unknown, god. He could, however, hope for success, if he received a revelation from the God of Abraham, who was still revered by certain portions of the people, and who still lived in the national memory.

Davidson¹⁶ remarks:

The name "Yahweh" can hardly have been altogether new to Israel before their deliverance. A new name would have been in those days a new god. . . . From prehistoric times it is probable that God was worshiped by this family under this name, or at least that the name was known in Israel.¹⁷

For the majority of modern critics the patriarchs are not individuals, but personifications of tribes. The stories concerning them are reminiscences of migrations before the entrance into Canaan

¹⁴ *History of the People of Israel*, Vol. I, p. 101.

¹⁵ *Geschichte der Hebräer* (1888), Vol. I, p. 157.

¹⁶ Hastings' *Dictionary of the Bible*, Vol. II, p. 199; *Theology of the Old Testament* (1904), p. 45.

¹⁷ So also Delitzsch in Herzog's *Realencyclopädie*, Vol. VI, p. 507; H. Schultz, *Theologie des Alten Testaments* (1878), p. 490.

and of experiences in the land of Canaan. They are largely mixed with legends of the Canaanites. That we have an authentic record of a revelation of Yahweh to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to say nothing of Adam, Seth, and Noah, would be denied by these critics; and yet they still maintain that in some way Yahweh was a pre-Mosaic god of Israel. Ewald,¹⁸ König,¹⁹ Nestle,²⁰ F. W. Schultz,²¹ Kuenen,²² and Robertson²³ hold that Yahweh was the God of the clan or family to which Moses belonged. In support of this view they appeal to Jochebed (a supposed compound of "Yahweh"), the name of Moses' mother. Wellhausen²⁴ thinks that Yahweh was either the god of Moses' family or of the tribe of Joseph. Smend²⁵ thinks that he was the god of Joseph, and appeals to the facts, that the sojourn of Joseph in Egypt is well attested; that Joshua, a member of this tribe, is the first person who is known with certainty to have borne a name compounded with "Yahweh;" and that the ark was in the possession of this tribe. Klostermann²⁶ and Kautzsch²⁷ hold that Yahweh was originally the god of Levi, and lay emphasis upon the tradition that Moses belonged to this tribe (Exod. 2:1), the enthusiasm for Yahweh displayed by Levi (Gen., chap. 34; Exod., chap. 32), and the occurrence of names compounded with "Yahweh" in the families of Moses and Eli.

In support of these theories, which in one form or another regard Yahweh as a primitive god of the Israelites, the following arguments are used:

1. J is the oldest document of the Hexateuch, and therefore it is reasonable to suppose that its conception is the most trustworthy. But it is universally admitted that J is very naïve in carrying back institutions of its own day to remote antiquity. "Yahweh" is

¹⁸ *Lehre der Bibel von Gott* (1871), Vol. I, pp. 336 f.

¹⁹ *Hauptprobleme der altisraelitischen Religionsgeschichte* (1884), p. 27.

²⁰ *Die israelitischen Eigennamen* (1876), p. 80.

²¹ Zöckler, *Handbuch der theologischen Wissenschaften* (1882), p. 299.

²² *Religion of Israel*, Vol. I, pp. 279 f.

²³ *Early Religion of Israel*, chap. xi.

²⁴ *History of Israel*, p. 433, n. 1.

²⁵ *Alttestamentliche Religionsgeschichte*, p. 29.

²⁶ *Geschichte des Volkes Israel* (1896), p. 67.

²⁷ "Religion of Israel," in Hastings' *Dictionary of the Bible*, Supplementary Volume, p. 627.

a Hebrew, or at least a Semitic, name, and cannot be older than the Hebrew, or the Semitic, peoples; J is certainly unhistorical, therefore, when he traces this name back to the beginning of the world; what guarantees that he is any more historical when he ascribes the worship of Yahweh to the patriarchs or to the forefathers of the Israel of the exodus? In the J narratives of Genesis the patriarchs are represented as thinking of Yahweh in the same way in which Israel thought of him at the time when the J document was written. They worship him at the springs, the standing stones, the holy trees, the caves, the altars, and the other high-places that Israel revered in the period of the kings. They practice the same sort of religion and bring the same sort of offerings that people in the author's own day brought. They consult the oracles of Yahweh at the shrines, as Israel was accustomed to consult them (Gen. 25:22). If J could thus carry back the entire Yahweh-cult of his own day to the age of the patriarchs, without reflecting that there must have been progress in the national religion, he could easily have supposed that the name "Yahweh" was primeval, even if it had originated at a later date.

2. It is claimed that both E and P recognize that Yahweh is the god of the fathers, and that this shows that their conception of Yahweh-worship as originating in the time of Moses rests upon theological speculation rather than historic fact. In Exod. 3:6 (E) Yahweh, when he appears to Moses, says: "I am the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob" (cf. vss. 13 and 15). In Exod. 3:10 (E) Yahweh speaks of Israel in Egypt as "my people." In like manner P's account of the theophany to Moses represents Yahweh as saying (Exod. 6:8): "I will bring you in unto the land which I swore to give to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob" (cf. Exod. 2:24). It should be observed, however, that, although both of these writers call Yahweh the god of the fathers, they never suggest that the name was known before the revelation to Moses. In Exod. 3:13 E represents the patriarchs as worshipers of the true God, but as ignorant of his name, and P in Exod. 6:2 says expressly that the name "Yahweh" was not known to them. In both of these cases we have merely an identification of the new god proclaimed by Moses with

the old god of the Hebrews. It was only natural that later writers should think that the god whom Moses called Yahweh was identical with El, Elohim, and Shaddai that had been worshiped by the forefathers, and that under the influence of this theory they should speak of Yahweh as the El or the Elohim of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; but this is something very different from an assertion that the god Yahweh was known to the patriarchs. It should be noted also that the formula "the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob" is apparently late. In the opinion of many recent critics, its presence in E is due to editorial interpolation.²⁸

3. It is claimed that the names "Joshua" and "Jochebed" prove that Yahweh was known before the time of Moses. "Joshua" is a well-attested name of the Mosaic age, and there is no sufficient reason to doubt that this name is compounded with "Yahweh." If this name was given to the future leader of Israel at birth, then the worship of Yahweh is older than the appearance of Moses as a prophet. But Numb. 13:8 calls him "Hoshea," and Numb. 13:16 says that Moses changed his name from "Hoshea" to "Joshua." If this be true, no inference can be drawn as to the antiquity of Yahweh-worship. "Jochebed" is the name given to Moses' mother by P in Exod. 6:20. If this was her original name, Yahweh-worship must have been practiced at least in the family of Moses before his call. But "Jochebed" is found only in the late Priestly Code, and statements of this code, when unsupported by older tradition, are always open to suspicion. It is doubtful also whether the name is really a compound of "Yahweh." Nestle, König, and Gray incline to the view that this is the case. If so, then the prefixed rather than suffixed "Yah" suggests that it was not invented by P, but was of pre-exilic formation; but whether or not it was derived from a trustworthy ancient source we cannot tell. Even if the name is genuine and is a compound of "Yahweh," it may, like "Joshua," have been changed from another name in consequence of the Mosaic revelation. These two names, accordingly, are an insecure foundation on which to build a theory that the name "Yahweh" was pre-Mosaic.

4. Kleistermann (p. 70) and Davidson (p. 49) argue that the form

²⁸ Staerk, *Studien zur Religions- und Sprachgeschichte des Alten Testaments*, p. 30.

"Yahweh" is archaic, and therefore must be older than the time of Moses. "Yihyeh," not "Yahweh," is classical Hebrew for "He will be." "Yahweh" belongs to an earlier stage of linguistic development, when Hebrew had not yet separated from the cognates. We do not know, however, the date at which Hebrew assumed its classical form, and therefore have no criterion for determining the antiquity of the form. Moreover, it is probable that the Israelites before they entered Canaan spoke an Aramaean or an Arabic dialect, and first learned "Hebrew" from the Canaanites. "Yahweh" may have been a normal form in the dialect spoken by Israel at the time of the exodus. It is also possible that this name was borrowed from some other Semitic people, and that the peculiarity of the form is evidence only of borrowing and not of antiquity.

5. It is claimed that the early Hebrew religion is so similar to other Semitic religions that it cannot have had a historical beginning different from them. Yahweh cannot have been a new god proclaimed to Israel by Moses, but must have been originally a natural, tribal deity like Chemosh of Moab and Molech of Ammon. Moses' work cannot have been the revelation of a new idea of God, but must have been simply the unification of the tribes of Israel in the cult of an ancestral deity. A full consideration of this argument would require a volume, and I must content myself with observing that, in spite of all similarities, there are yet fundamental differences between the religion of Israel and other Semitic religions that imply that there was something exceptional about its origin. The magnificent development of prophetism that appeared only in Israel shows that the god of Moses must have been something more than the tribal gods of the other Semites. Once admit this, and there is no difficulty in believing that Moses may have given Israel a new name for God.²⁹

6. All the critics mentioned above argue that, if Moses had preached a new god to Israel, the people would not have received his message. But there are frequent cases in history where tribes have adopted the religions of other peoples. Judaism, Buddhism, Christianity, and Mohammedanism have all been accepted by

²⁹ Giesebrecht, *Geschichtigkeit des Sinaibundes*, pp. 7 ff.; Sellin, *Beiträge zur israelitischen und jüdischen Religionsgeschichte*.

nations that previously adhered to other systems. It is not impossible, therefore, that Israel was converted to the worship of the god of another race. The historian has no right to decide *a priori* whether or not events are possible, but is bound to examine the evidence in the case.

III. *The Mosaic theory*.—In lack of sufficient evidence in support of the theory of J that Yahweh was the primitive deity of Israel, we turn to a consideration of the rival theory of E and P that he first became the god of Israel at the time of the exodus. This tradition has been accepted by Riehm,³⁰ Dillmann,³¹ Stade,³² Budde,³³ Marti,³⁴ and Gray.³⁵ In favor of it the following arguments may be urged:

1. The larger number of witnesses agree in support of this tradition. J stands alone in the view that Yahweh was the primeval god of Israel, but E, P, and the early prophets agree that he was Israel's god "from the land of Egypt." This fact creates a presumption in favor of the theory of E.

2. Names compounded with "Yahweh" are absent from all the documents before the time of Moses. The first "Yahweh"-compound mentioned by E is Joshua. The lengthy lists of names given by P in Genesis contain not one "Yahweh"-compound. In these cases it may be said, of course, that the writers have suppressed "Yahweh"-names in accordance with their theory of the origin of Yahweh-worship, but this they could hardly have done consistently if such names had been known to them. Still more significant is the fact that J, who represents the patriarchs as worshipers of Yahweh, never once gives a name compounded with "Yahweh" in any of their families. The only Old Testament writer who records "Yahweh"-names in pre-Mosaic times is the late and unreliable Chronicler.

3. The infrequency of names compounded with "Yahweh" before the time of David is evidence that the worship of this god

³⁰ *Einleitung in das Alte Testament* (1889), Vol. I, p. 60.

³¹ *Handbuch der alttestamentlichen Theologie* (1895), p. 216.

³² *Geschichte des Volkes Israels*, Vol. I (1881), p. 130.

³³ *Religion of Israel to the Exile* (1889), pp. 1-38.

³⁴ *Geschichte der israelitischen Religion* (1897), p. 57.

³⁵ *Hebrew Proper Names* (1896), p. 258.

was introduced by Moses. Compounds with "El" are common, as we should expect if God had been worshiped under this name in pre-Mosaic times. Compounds with "Yahweh" are very rare, and are found only in the families of religious leaders. Jonathan, the grandson of Moses (Judg. 18:30), and Abijah, the son of Samuel (1 Sam. 8:2), are unquestionably Yahweh-names. Joshua is probably also such a name. Joash, the father of Gideon (Judg. 6:11, 29), Jotham, the son of Gideon (Judg. 9:5), and Jael, the son of Samuel (1 Sam. 8:2), are possibly compounded with "Yahweh." Jochebed, the mother of Moses (Exod. 6:20), is very doubtful. These are all the "Yahweh"-names that are recorded before David. In the time of David the number rises to seventeen, and all but four of these belong to royal or priestly families. After the time of David nearly all the kings of Judah and of Israel bear "Yahweh" names, and such compounds begin to be frequent among the common people. This gradual increase of "Yahweh"-names from Moses to the exile is good evidence that the worship of this god was first introduced by Moses.³⁶

4. The connection of Yahweh with Sinai in Hebrew tradition, which we have already considered in another connection, is proof that Israel first learned to know this god at the time of the exodus. J, E, and P alike know of no initial revelation to Moses in Egypt. He has to be brought to the mount of God in order to make the acquaintance of Yahweh. In Exod. 3:12 (E) Yahweh says: "When thou hast brought forth the children of Israel out of Egypt, ye shall serve God upon this mountain"—a statement which implies that hitherto Israel has not worshiped Yahweh, and that it is to begin worshipping him when it comes to his abode. In 14:19 (E) Yahweh himself is not present with Israel in Egypt, but it is only his angel who goes before the camp; yet in 17:6 (E), when Israel has come to Horeb, Yahweh says: "Behold I will stand before thee upon the rock in Horeb." It is noteworthy also that, according to E, Moses builds no altar to Yahweh until he has reached Rephidim at the foot of Sinai-Horeb (17:15; cf. 24:4). In J, the frequently repeated demand, "Let us go three days' journey into the wilderness that we may worship Yahweh," also implies that Yahweh had not been worshiped in Egypt.

³⁶ Gray, *Hebrew Proper Names* (1896), pp. 255-64.

The only reply that advocates of the primeval theory can make to this argument is to claim that Israel worshiped Yahweh from time immemorial at Sinai; and that, when it made this mountain its goal, it was only returning to an ancient holy place. This view was first suggested by Land³⁷ and has been followed by Schultz,³⁸ Wellhausen,³⁹ Smend,⁴⁰ and Kautzsch.⁴¹ Wellhausen remarks:

The sanctity of Sinai is independent of the covenant between Yahweh and Israel. It does not show the peculiarity of the Hebrew religion, but, on the contrary, its connection with an older stage. Sinai was the abode of the deity, the holy mountain, not only for the Israelites, but for all the tribes in the neighborhood.

Smend says:

The relation of Israel to Sinai is older than Moses. . . . Israelites in Goshen and Israelites in the Sinaitic Peninsula long before adored Yahweh and had connection with Sinai. . . . The worship of Yahweh at Sinai was more than a tribal cult; it was the expression of a fellowship that before Moses already existed between several tribes of later Israel. Here Moses could lay hold in uniting Israel in the name of Yahweh.

For those who hold that Yahweh was the primeval god of Israel this view is necessary, but it rests on no historical foundation. Nowhere in Hebrew tradition is it once suggested that Israel recognized Sinai as a holy mountain before the exodus. If this had been the case, some story would have been told bringing the patriarchs into connection with it. The absence of such narratives shows that the Israelites' reverence for Sinai dated from the days of Moses, and thus favors the view that Yahweh was a new deity first recognized at that time.

5. The characteristic rites of the religion of Yahweh are traced by Hebrew tradition only to the time of Moses. In the cases of E and P this is perhaps not surprising, but the same is true in the case of J. Although J states that the forefathers knew the name Yahweh, he represents them as practicing only the rites of general Semitic religion. All the peculiar rites of Yahweh-worship he represents as introduced by Moses. According to Exod. 4:24-26,

³⁷ *Theologisch Tijdschrift*, 1868, pp. 156-70.

³⁸ *Alttestamentliche Theologie* (1889), p. 111.

³⁹ *Israelitische und jüdische Geschichte* (1895), p. 12.

⁴⁰ *Alttestamentliche Religionsgeschichte* (1893), p. 31.

⁴¹ *Hastings' Dictionary of the Bible*, Vol. V, p. 627.

Moses does not know that Yahweh requires circumcision until he is taught this by his wife Zipporah. According to 10:26, the Israelites do not know how they will have to worship Yahweh until they come to his dwelling-place. In 12:21 ff.; 12:39 ff.; 13:6 ff.; 13:11 ff., J traces the origin of passover, unleavened bread, and firstlings to the time of Moses. The fundamental provisions of the Book of the Covenant in Exod., chap. 34, and the consecration of Levi in Exod. 32:26, likewise show that J knows no real beginning of Yahweh-worship in Israel before the time of Moses.

6. It is easier to explain the invention of J's conception of the origin of Yahweh-worship than it is to explain E's conception. If Yahweh had really been the primeval god of Israel, tradition would have had no motive for making him a god first taught by Moses; but, on the other hand, if he had been first adopted at the time of the exodus, it would have been natural for tradition to invent a higher antiquity for him. In all such cases historical criticism must follow the line of least resistance. This case is similar to that of the two accounts of the killing of Goliath in 1 Sam., chap. 17, and 2 Sam., chap. 23. It is easier to believe that David falsely got the credit of Elhanan's exploit than to believe that Elhanan took the credit away from David.

The result of our investigations thus far is the conclusion that Yahweh was not a god adopted by Israel from the Canaanites, nor yet a god whom it worshiped from remote antiquity; but that it first came to know him at the time of the exodus. The question now arises: Whence did it derive the knowledge of this god? How did it begin to worship him? The answer to this question will be discussed in the next number of the *Biblical World*.